

In the Drawings:

Please substitute the enclosed Replacement Sheet for the current sheet depicting Fig. 2 and the Replacement Sheet for the current sheet depicting Figs. 8 and 9.

REMARKS

An Office Action was mailed on June 2, 2005.

After a preliminary amendment, claims 4-13 are pending, of which claims 4, 6 and 9 are independent claims.

By the foregoing, replacement sheets for Fig. 2, 8, and 9 are provided, the specification is amended, claims 6-8 and 11-13 are cancelled, claims 4, 5, and 9 are amended. No new matter has been added.

To correct an unintentional duplicative use of reference 16 to refer to flexible tubes connect to the endoscope and a handle of connection block 14, Applicant now references the handle as 17 and uses 16 to designate the flexible tubes. Accordingly, the specification at page 4, line 31 and at page 6, line 15 is amended to reflect the change and replacement sheets for Fig. 2, 8 and 9 now includes reference 17 removing duplicative reference 16. No new matter has been added. Entry of the amendment changes in their entirety is solicited.

Turning to the substantive rejections, claims 6-8 and 11-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,738,824 to Pfeifer (Pfeifer). Claims 4-5 and 9-10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Pfeifer in view of U.S. Patent 5,425,815 to Parker et al. (Parker).

The present invention is a system for treating used endoscopes so that they are suitable for reuse. All independent claims as now amended recite "*a cleaning device for domestic cleaning of the endoscope; a disinfecting device for disinfecting the endoscope, and a drying device for drying the endoscope; wherein the cleaning device, the disinfecting device, and the drying device are separate devices situated at a distance from one another.*" Support thereof may be found at least on pg. 3, line 38 et al.; pg 7, line 9 et al.

Pfeifer discloses a method for testing and cleaning instruments 20 using a tray 10 submerged in steel basin 40 while supported by holders 41. Tray 10 is submerged in a fluid that is dispensed from a reservoir 47 via distributor 56 and valves 57 into tray 10.

Pfeifer teaches that reservoir 47 can be filled or emptied via pump 50 with cleaning fluid, disinfecting and sterilizing fluid. Col. 9, lines 56 et al., col. 6, line 43. In other words, Pfeifer utilizes the same device for cleaning, disinfecting and sterilizing. Thus, not only is Pfeifer silent with respect to a drying device and to a cleaning device, a disinfecting device, and a drying device being separate, but Pfeifer teaches away from the present invention by utilizing the same device.

The present invention as claimed by all independent claims utilizes separate cleaning, disinfecting, and drying devices. Therein Pfeifer fails to teach, disclose, or suggest the advantageous aspects of quicker assembly-line throughput of multiple endoscope treatments as each device is suitably used for its own specific task without being occupied in other tasks before becoming available again for use.

Parker discloses a method of cleaning endoscopes. Parker teaches that:

According to the present invention a method of cleaning medical instruments comprises the steps of placing the instrument in an enclosure and subjecting the instrument to a cleaning phase in which a cleansing solution is applied to the surfaces of the instrument, a disinfection phase in which a disinfecting solution is applied to the surfaces of the instrument, a rinsing phase in which a flushing solution is applied to the surfaces of the instrument, a purging phase in which a volatile liquid is applied to the surfaces of the instrument and a drying phase in which a drying gas is passed over the surfaces of the instrument. Col. 1, lines 23-34.

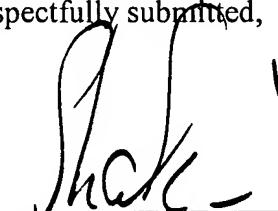
Parker similarly is not only silent with respect to a cleaning device, a disinfecting device, and a drying device being separate as now claimed, but Parker teaches away from the present invention by utilizing the same enclosure for all steps. Thus, Parker also fails to appreciate the advantageous aspects of quicker assembly-line throughput of multiple endoscope treatments as each device is suitably used for its own specific task without being occupied in other tasks before becoming available again for use.

In view of the remarks set forth above, applicant believes the application is in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested. All dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons provided for the allowability of the independent claims from which they depend.

However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper, including any extension fees, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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